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Statement by U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Robert B. Zoellick

WASHINGTON - The following is a statement by U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick following his meeting today with Ministers and senior officials of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru:

“This afternoon I had an excellent meeting with my Andean colleagues. We discussed the critical importance of Congressional action to renew and expand the Andean Trade Preference program, which expired last December. ATPA provides the Andean countries with increased access to the U.S. market and is a powerful tool for promoting prosperity and development.

“The Andean officials stressed the importance to their countries of Trade Promotion Authority legislation also pending in a conference committee of the House and Senate. They expressed to me their hope that TPA will be approved quickly. TPA is fundamental to our pursuit of mutually beneficial market-opening agreements, both within the hemisphere, through the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and globally, through the WTO’s Doha negotiating agenda.

“I urge the Congress to complete action on both the ATPA and TPA and to send this legislation to the President as soon as possible. ATPA is a vital program for the developing Andean democracies that are on the front line of combating narco-terrorism. TPA is critical for growing the economies of the United States and the other nations of this hemisphere.”

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